
Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What is the purpose of risk assessment?

- **Support the implementation of TIS**
- **Divert up to 25 percent of nonviolent, prison bound offenders**
- **Identify offenders with lowest risk of recidivism**
- **Risk assessment integrated into TIS guidelines**

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

Who is eligible for risk assessment?

- **Fraud, Drug, and Larceny offenders**
- **Current offense did not involve violent crime**
- **No prior record of violent crime**
- **Guidelines recommend prison or jail**

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What factors are included on Worksheet D?

Offender Characteristics

- gender
- age
- marital status
- employment status

Current Offense Information

- offender acted alone
- additional offenses at conviction

Prior Adult Criminal Record

- total felony/misd. convictions
- arrested/confined in past 12 mo.
- prior drug felony convictions
- prior incarcerations as an adult

Prior Juvenile Record

- offender incarcerated as juvenile

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

Expansion of pilot

Judges

- Vast majority felt RA good complement to guidelines. No judge opposed having instrument made available
- Instrument should go statewide with qualifications: 1) assess effectiveness of RA to predict recidivism, 2) re-examine demographic factors, 3) begin getting feedback on which alternatives work best

Probation officers

- In general, POs like objective risk assessment as method to divert offenders – felt it could improve consistency of judicial decisions
- Many POs not supportive of expansion unless demographic factors were reassessed

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

Expansion of pilot

Defense attorneys

- Generally favor expansion if helps divert more from prison.

Commonwealth Attorneys

- Support alternative sanctions (and risk assessment) for offenders needing a first chance--not supportive of diversion as intended by legislature
- Generally felt guidelines should be followed if incarceration recommended.
- Prison bound drug/property offenders were previously given chances (have prior records/probation revocations)---should not get further alternatives.

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

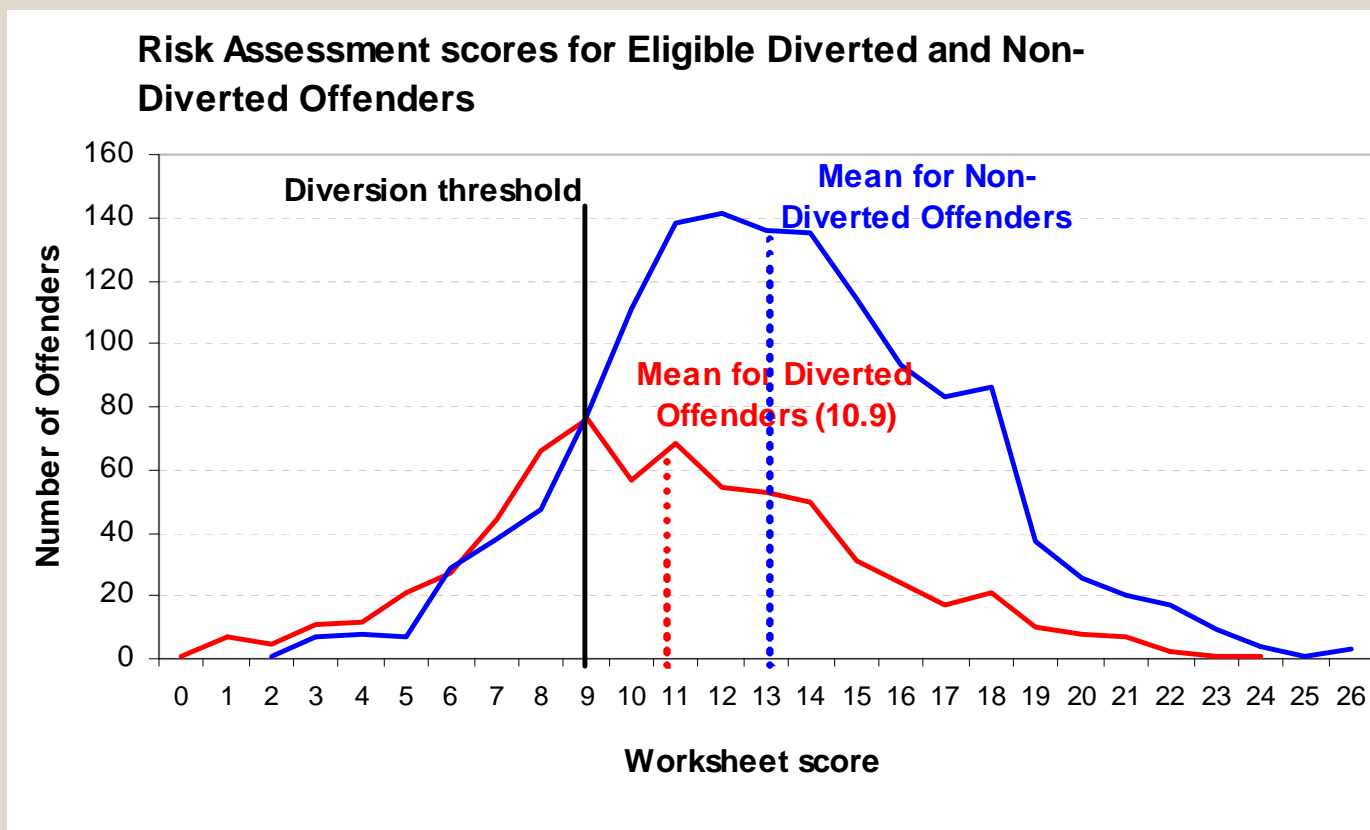
How is diversion defined?

- **Prison to jail, state or local alternative sanction or probation**
- **Jail to state or local alternative sanction or probation**

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

A majority diverted who scored greater than nine had scores close to the threshold



Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

When diverted, what alternative sanctions exist in Virginia?

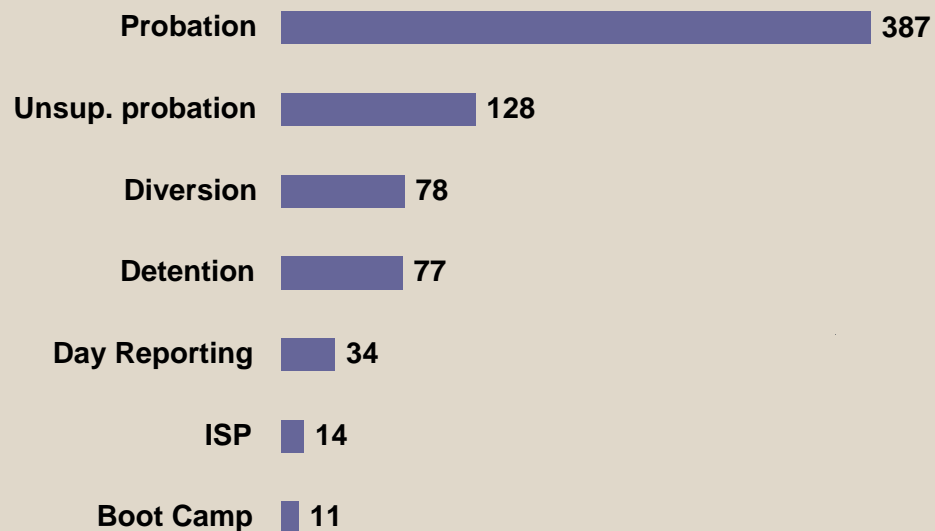
- **ISP**
- **Electronic monitoring**
- **Day reporting**
- **Boot camp**
- **Diversion centers**
- **Detention centers**
- **Drug, alcohol, mental health treatment (other local programs)**

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

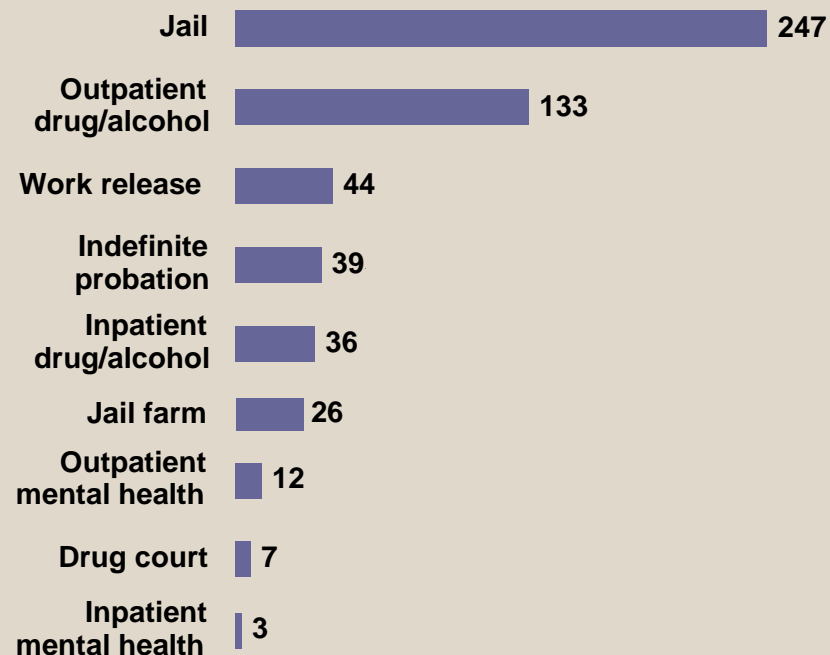
What are the primary diversion sanctions imposed?

State sanctions handed down



State sanction "package" received
(total number of sanctions indicated)

Local sanctions handed down



Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

How successful is instrument in predicting recidivism?

- 1) How do we define recidivism?
 - New arrest
 - New arrest resulting in conviction
- 2) Once diverted, can we predict recidivate/not recidivate?
- 3) Once diverted, can we predict time to recidivism?
 - Offenders tracked from 11 months to 3 years
 - Average of 2 years
- 4) How do we measure success?
 - Survival models
 - KM—factors one at a time
 - Cox regression—all factors together

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What factors are related to recidivate/not recidivate?

New arrest: 29% of diverted offenders

Conviction: 14% of diverted offenders

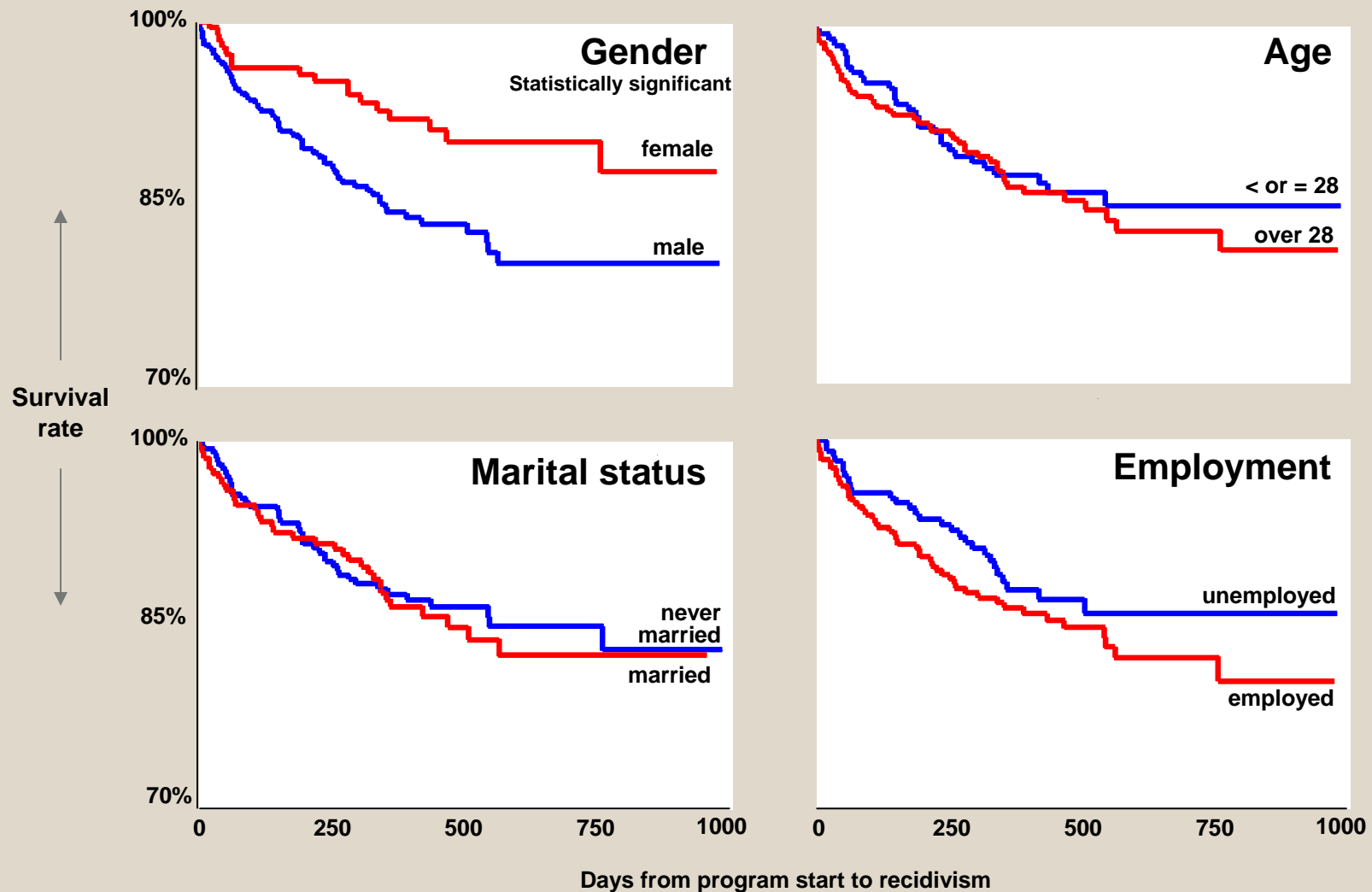
What matters in predicting recidivism (new arrest)?

- Variation by site
- Fraud and drug offenders **less** likely than larceny
- Males **more** likely
- Prior arrest/confinement past 12 months **more** likely
- More total felony/misdemeanor convictions **more** likely
- Past drug conviction(s) **more** likely
- Prior adult incarcerations **more** likely

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

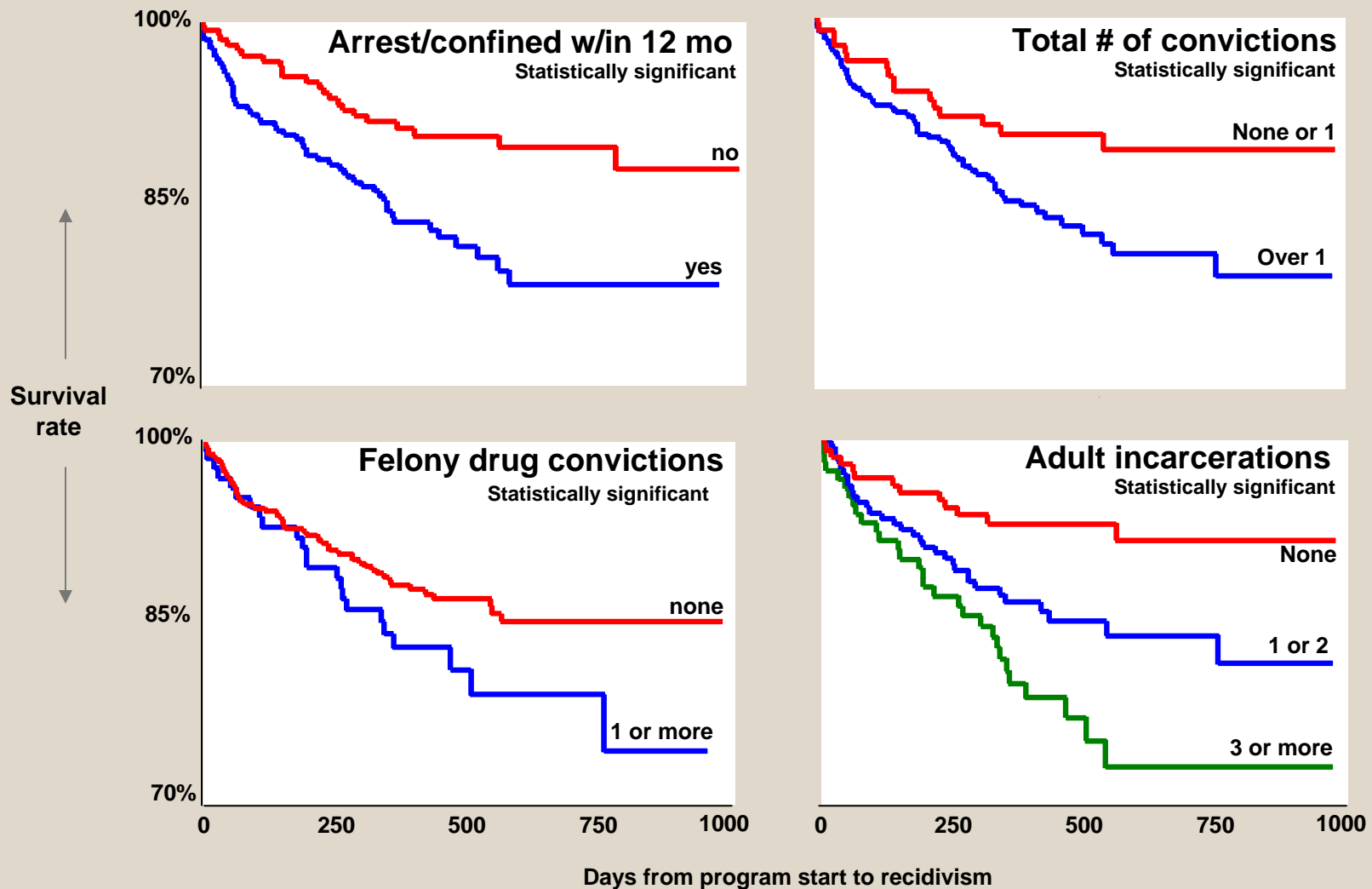
Demographics



Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

Prior record



Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What conclusions can we draw?

- If RA working as anticipated, key information related to recidivism being used by judges
- Because diverted offenders should have low rates of recidivism, Worksheet D factors should have weak correlation with probability of future recidivism
- If Worksheet D factors significantly predict recidivism in full sample, insignificance in diversion sample hypothesized to indicate efficient use of information by judges

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What is benefit-cost analysis?

- Estimates the monetary value of all significant benefits and costs of diversion
- Compare two potential “states of the world”
- Compare benefits and costs of diverted offenders to benefits and costs of same offenders had they not been diverted

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What are the monetary benefits of diversion?

Benefits of reduced prison and jail:

363 offenders diverted from prison

- Saving: 409 prison years (15 months per offender)
- Value: about \$8 million (assuming \$22K per offender)

192 offenders diverted from jail

- Saving: 27 jail years (2.5 months per offender)
- Value: \$724,000 (assuming \$3,700 per offender)

Total: \$8.7 million

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What are the additional benefits of diversion?

- More productive citizens – societal benefits
- Decreased recidivism – potential for lowering crime rate
- Enhanced quality of life for offenders
- Value of community service, jail farm programs, etc.

Difficult to measure

- Assume \$0 in calculation
- Conservative estimate of benefits

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What are the monetary costs of alternative sanctions?

- 1,006 sanctions prescribed for 555 offenders
- Total sanctions cost about \$6.2 million
- 56% of total sanction cost (\$3.5 million) attributable to jail as alternative to prison

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What are the net benefits?

Benefits	\$8,700,000
Costs	\$7,200,000
Net benefit of diversion through risk assessment	\$1,500,000

What would be the impact of statewide risk assessment?

If used statewide during 2000, estimated net benefit \$3,700,000 & \$4,500,000.

Virginia Risk Assessment Evaluation

Funded by the National Institute of Justice

What is the benefit of risk assessment as related to diversion?

- Risk assessment formalizes the diversion process—judges say instrument makes them more cognizant of diversion possibilities
- Risk assessment insures that diversion into programs continues
- Costs saved through diversion can be more predictable when risk assessment is in place
- Offenders who score above threshold (higher risks of recidivism or potentially dangerous) are given closer scrutiny concerning diversion